



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
April 1, 2010

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### **North Dakota Department of Health and State Board of Animal Health Warn Residents About Risk of Salmonella Infection From Baby Birds**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health and the State Board of Animal Health are warning residents about the risk of salmonella infection from baby birds, including chicks and ducklings, according to Sarah Weninger, epidemiologist with the Department of Health.

Colored eggs, baskets of toys and candy bunnies are often present at Easter time. However, some Easter traditions can place children at risk for serious illness. Baby chicks and ducklings often carry the harmful bacteria *Salmonella*. North Dakota has had several cases of *Salmonella* associated with exposure to baby chicks or ducklings.

“Cases of salmonella related to handling baby chicks or ducklings continue to be reported from several states and can be serious,” Weninger said. “Even chicks and ducklings that appear healthy can be infected and can shed salmonella in their stool. Oftentimes, the birds’ feathers and beaks are contaminated, so just touching the birds and then putting a finger in the mouth or touching food can lead to infection.”

The Department of Health and the State Board of Animal Health are working together to provide educational materials to farm supply and animal feed stores about preventing the spread of *Salmonella*. These educational materials also will be available to the public who purchase baby birds and feed at these and other venues.

The risk of acquiring *Salmonella* infections from baby birds can be reduced by following these guidelines:

- Do not purchase chicks or ducklings as gifts.
- Do not let children younger than 5 touch or handle baby birds or the packaging and cages in which they are being held.

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- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling baby birds or touching objects in contact with them.
- If objects such as toys, pacifiers or bottles come into contact with the bird environment, wash them with warm soapy water.
- Do not allow anyone to eat or drink while interacting with the baby birds or their environment.
- Keep baby birds away from areas where food is prepared or consumed.
- Talk to your veterinarian, nurse or doctor about health risks associated with baby birds.

Symptoms of infection with *Salmonella* include diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever, usually within eight to 72 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most healthy people recover without antibiotic treatment. Infants, young children, the elderly and those who have impaired immune systems are at greater risk for severe infections.

Anyone who has contact with birds and animals should wash their hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds after handling them.

For additional information, contact Sarah Weninger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or the State Board of Animal Health at 701.328.2654.

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